The Progressive Review

Nbr 328
October 1994

Finding the new mainstream

Over half the American people, according to a recent poll, feel we need a new major party. This fact has been reported by the media but without recognition of its import. The press and tube continue to treat American politics as though it involved two major political organizations offering discreet alternatives to the voter, when in fact our politics has been reduced to two increasingly *minor* parties -- of similar views and with a common base of corporate financial support -- from which average voters yearn to escape.

The result is a yo-yo politics which, like yo-yo dieting, leads to nothing but frustration. It also leads to citizens frantically searching for ways to emit an urgent cry of electoral distress -- whether through expulsion of the incumbent, term limits, or even ignoring such basic data as a candidate's criminal record.

At present, the only alternative to the unctuous, unreliable, untrustworthy and insupportable Bill Clinton and his crowd of hubris-laden hustlers is to increase the power of the even more insupportable Bob Dole and his crowd of self-righteous caliphs of troglodytic inclination. Such is the sorry plight to which our democracy has fallen; yet reading the media one gets the sense that it considers those who rebel against this choice not only angry and unsettled, but even a bit odd and dangerous. There is conversely little sense that since the vast majority of American voters are indeed angry and unsettled, it might in fact be the establishment -- of which the corporate media is such a central part -- that is out of step.

If the media spent more time exploring the non-establishment voices of the country, rather than just maniacally reiterating the irrelevant shibboleths of the extremist middle and its enervated elites, it might discover that what is going is a massive change in the relation between the public and its leaders. Left, right, north, south, black, white, old and young, there is a growing feeling that the American establishment has lied, failed, conned, stolen and betrayed a few times too often.

Given the hammerlock the two old parties have on the electoral system, one possible outcome of such a development is anarchy and disorder, a chaotic politics driven by spite rather than substance -- in which innumerable interests combat desperately for their share of the carrion of a former democracy known as the United States. Another possible outcome is a continuation of the *ancien regime* supported by increasingly repressive measures to mute the public's permanent displeasures and a huge apparatus of political anemometry to discern and sate its momentary pleasures. The para-military occupation of many of our center cities and the war on drugs is a model, its techniques ultimately as applicable against the restless young, the white unemployed, or an angry middle class as against the urban black male.

But there is another alternative, which is to permit democracy to function as it should, to adapt to forces abroad in the land, and to begin a serious search for a new common ground upon which to reconstitute our battered and abused country. In this, we can expect little help from the current establishment or from its media. The Democrats, having virtually immolated themselves in the absurd cause of their final hero, Bill Clinton, have nothing to offer. The best the Republicans can come up with is a contract, allegedly *for*, but in fact *on*, America, a remarkable list that reveals how selfish the GOP believes the average citizen is. As for the media, it will, as always, either meddle mindlessly or -- in the service of its parent corporations -- attempt to makes any new consensus as mushy as the old.

But is there truly a common ground for a new mainstream?

I have come increasingly to believe that there is and that it is far broader than even most on the non-establishment left, right or center would believe.

This belief is encouraged by experience. I keep finding myself at unexpected intersections of ideologies widely considered to be hopelessly at odds. I believe there is a common ground because I have seen it.

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The Progressive Review
Bucking the system since 1966

The Progressive Review is published 10 times a year. Formerly the DC Gazette. One year subscription: $17. Two year subscription: $31. Single copies: $2.00. The Review uses Pacific News Service and monitors Peacenet.

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ISSN 0889-2202

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I've been noticing this phenomena for some years, but it has particularly struck me the wake of writing a book about current politics. This book, *Shadows of Hope,* has been uniformly rejected or ignored by establishment media (although the sainted and non-establishment Coleman McCarthy gave it a nice review in the *Washington Post).* On the other hand, it has received a friendly reception in as diverse locales as a black radio station in DC, a conservative talk show in Idaho Falls, a liberal weekly in Texas and a west coast business column. WAMU -- Washington's establishment-stroking public radio station -- wouldn't touch it, but Baltimore public radio, in a more industrial town, was happy to have me on. The establishment left such as the *Village Voice* and the *Nation* have not reviewed it but I spent a cordial hour on a conservative talk show in Boston.

The fact that the book's views have been been dissed by the media elite but appear reasonable and worth discussing by a wide range of people outside the establishment suggested something was happening that demanded further exploration. I found, among other things, that my experience was not unique. For example, when I mentioned to a Virginia Green activist that it might be interesting to get together with some Perot people to see if there was anything the two insurgencies had in common, she told me they had already met and had produced the first draft of a platform. Here are a few of the things agreed upon by those present, including Greens and members of the Patriot Party of Virignia, which is led by disenchanted Perot supporters:

- Single payer healthcare adminstered by the state and local governments.
- Opposition to out of state or out of district political contributions.
- Term limits.
- Initiative and referendum.
- Performance based standards for high schools
- Action for clean water and clean air
- Improved regional transportaiton
- Replacement of personal proporty tax with energy taxes
- A bottle bill.
- Reducing crime through building families and improved education.
- Required minimm recycled content in products.
- Measures for the prevention of homelessness

Just as great rivers change course, so the American political mainstream is shifting. It is likely that one of those great silent revolutions of the heart may be underway, a revolution not defined yet by new policies or new parties so much as by a new way of feeling about things and new values, a cultural shift that will change alliances and undermind old elites. A transformation of the

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collective mind that inevitably precedes change in the statehouse or on Capital Hill.

The extremist middle wants us to stay divided by abortion, and gun control and race, but what what if we ask the question the establishment doesn't want us to ask: do we have something in common?

I think if we did ask that question -- we being the Perot people, Greens, libertarians, decentralist progressives, community-based activists, ethnic leaders, the restless young, as well as conservatives who believe in preserving both the environment and democracy -- we might come up with a sizable list of values, viewpoints and tendencies shared by many who don't like the way things are now. *(For our try at this, see the centerfold.)*

It would only be rough and just a starting point for conversation. There is plenty of unfinished business. There are questions to be asked. Can we agree to disagree on some issues? Can we agree on the manner in which we disagree? Can we agree on fair rules of the game? Can we champion other's freedom and opportunity as well as our own?

It is, I think, an exercise worth trying at a time when the establishment asks us to choose between Clinton and Dole. It is worth coming together and trying to talk about it before someone at a network or on the op ed page of the *Washington Post* tells us who we are or what to think, before the majority sentiment of the American heart is once again misdiagnosed by those in power as merely a passing distemper. With the disintegration of established politics, we have little to lose and considerable capacity to surprise not only ourselves but also those who have so usurped the democracy that was meant to be ours. --*Sam Smith*

WEATHER REPORT

Health reform

There was an important and scary article on HMOs and the takeover of the American medical industry in the Sept. 19 issues of *The Nation*. In it Steffie Woolhandler and David Himmelstein of Physicians for a National Health Program make these points:

• "Never has control of so vast an industry shifted so rapidly from a dispersed array of small and medium-scale producers -- in this case, doctors and local hospitals -- to a few huge corporations whose leveraged financial clout is their only qualification of health care leadership."

What they're saying about

SHADOWS OF HOPE

by Sam Smith. . .

"[Compared to *The Agenda*] Smith's book is by far the wiser and more useful and certainly the more entertaining of the two. . . [Bob Woodward's] judgments, when he works up the energy to make any, are purely mundane. Smith, on the other hand, is turned on by politics. . .His saucy judgments remind one of the way H. L. Mencken handled presidential campaigns." -- *Robert Sherrill, The Texas Observer.*

"Smith offers [a] community based, participatory politics that's neither left nor right wing but the whole bird. . . . His work is not different from what quality journalism ought to be: truth-seeking, independent, fair-minded and debunking." -- *Coleman McCarthy, Washington Post*

"If you want an understanding of how all ideas in Washington DC are eventually trivialized and mulched by the chipper-shredder of media politics, it is Smith's book rather than Woodward's that provides the insight. . . As freely as [Woodward's] sources spoke, *The Agenda* is, oddly enough, not filled with memorable quotes. Fortunately, *Shadows* has an abundance of them." -- *James J. McCusker, Everett, Washington, Herald*

$22.50

Indiana University Press

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• "GE employees in Boston are now forbidden to call their doctors for an appointment; instead, they must call a company reviewer who filters requests."

• "By 1993, ten firms controlled 70 percent of the HMO market; two of them -- Met Life and Travellers -- have since merged."

• "Hillary Rodham Clinton's task force of 500 included only a handful of people who had ever been to a hospital ward outside of visiting hours; most were too young and healthy even to have served as patients."

We liked Dr. Koop's description of managed care as forcing us to deal with a "clerk who has never been to medical school and can't even pronounce the words being discussed."

Just politics

The Center for Voting and Democracy has done a study of Cambridge MA's PR voting system and found it could be easily computerized. The demonstration is important because critics have argued that systems such as that in Cambridge are too complicated. CVD replicated the handcount in two minutes on a home computer. CVD recognized, however, that the people of Cambridge might not enjoy such efficiency and suggested that "the program could be adapted to maintain the Cambridge tradition of studying and discussing each transfer of ballots in a public setting."

An Arizona ballot initiative would prohibit the state's lawyers from serving in Congress based on the argument that they are "officers of the court," i.e. members of the judicial branch and thereby barred by the Constitution -- which says you can't hold two office in two federal branches at the same time.

The mediacracy

From an introduction of Philadelphia Mayor Edward Rendell: "He's a democrat but he doesn't ask for handouts." The intro didn't come from Bob Dole; rather it was the lead-in on the *Today Show.*

Meet the Press, another product of the corporate media, has been sponsored of late by the Alliance for GATT, as well as two multinationals, Archer Daniel Midlands and ITT.

Drug busts

A *Parade* Magazine phone-in poll found that 70% of respondents thought marijuana should be legal and regulated like alcohol. An NBC phone-in poll as part of a week-long series on violence in America found that 52% favored the legalization of *all* drugs.

From the *Atlanta Journal/Constitution*: "It is now clear that the nation's much-ballyhooed 'war on drugs' has been a dismal failure, a waste of precious taxpayer dollars. Instead of reducing violent crime, this desperate 'war' has led the nation to squander the talents of countless men and women by incarcerating them for petty, nonviolent crimes."

LA Mayor Richard Riordan is telling police to wink at state law and allow needle exchange programs to operate freely in his city. Riordan declared a state of emergency in the city because of the AIDS epidemic.

Progressives hoping for a more enlightened drug policy under Clinton have been repeatedly disappointed. A recent example was the administration's rejection of a major study of cocaine that it funded. The report by the Rand Drug Policy Research Center concluded that $3 billion should be slashed from law enforcement and switched to drug treatment. Said the study, "Treatment is seven times more cost-effective than domestic drug enforcement in reducing cocaine use and 15 times more cost-effective in reducing the social costs and lost productivity."

Wisconsin has passed legislation that allows landlords to evict tenants simply because a law enforcement officer suspects they might be involved in drugs.

A Quebec court has ruled that an American drug trafficker cannot be extradited because American drug laws are human rights violations. Said Judge Morris J. Fish: "It is my view that a majority of . . . reasonably well informed Canadians would consider that appellant faces a situation in Michigan that shocks the conscience and is simply unacceptable." The defendant would face a twenty-year minimum sentence if extradited.

Whitewater ripples

The *Wall Street Journal*, admitting it was "leaving it to less responsible sources to publish the first reports," took note this summer of various mysterious deaths in Arkansas. It concluded, "pondering the string of violent coincidences, we feel some duty to share with readers one factor that colors our own thinking about the Arkansas connections. In particular, with drugs come violence, and also money laundering. And laying aside any thought of presidential involvement, there is a story here worth our attention and yours."

The *Journal,* staying on this case better than most establishment papers, also pointed out a nice indication of the degree of cover-up going on: "Consider that Rep. Leach has felt it necessary to bring suit in federal court in an attempt to get documents on Madison from the RTC and the Office of Thrift Supervision. Such documents were routinely provided to the minority banking staff in previous S&L scandals -- Lincoln, Silverado, Centrust, Columbia and others. But when it comes to Arkansas, the supposedly independent regulatory agencies have gone into a protective crouch."

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THIS MODERN WORLD by TOM TOMORROW
YOU'RE ENTERING A STRANGE DIMENSION... WHERE SUBSTANCE IS IRRELEVANT... AND IMAGE REIGNS SUPREME...
E=mc²
...A DIMENSION WHERE REPORTERS ARE PAID EXHORBITANT SALARIES TO BARK SUPERFICIAL QUESTIONS AT ADMINISTRATION FLACKS...
PRESS
DEE DEE--
DEE DEE--
DEE DEE--WHAT IS THE PRESIDENT'S POLICY ON--ER--THE ISSUES?
...AND WHERE JOURNALISM IS LARGELY LIMITED TO VERBATIM REPORTS OF EVASIVE OFFICIAL DOUBLESPEAK...
WELL, THE PRESIDENT IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE ISSUES...AND INTENDS TO BEGIN TO THINK ABOUT ADDRESSING THEM SOMETIME IN THE INDETERMINATE FUTURE!--NEXT QUESTION?
DEE DEE--
DEE DEE--
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WASHINGTON PRESS ZONE...
GOD HELP YOU...
DEE DEE--
DEE DEE--
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Robert Fitch in *Newsday*: "Yes, Jimmy Carter had Bert Lance. But in this administration, everyone is Bert Lance. . . Harry Truman came out of the Kansas City machine. But he didn't bring it with him to DC. "

Reinventing budget-cutting

In the name of more efficient government, Gore at al are bragging that they have closed HUD's ten regional offices. So to see HUD being invented you're going to have to travel further.

NOAA is cutting back on the number of nautical charts available and the frequency with which they are updated. This means out of date and dangerous charts. There are currently 27,000 chart corrections that do not appear on NOAA charts. The Boat Owners Assn. of the US says that "environmental groups have not made the connection between accurate charts and the potential for a major accident."

News from the colonies

Strip away the hyperbole about Haiti and you're left with yet another American occupation of a small Latin American country for time and purpose uncertain. This occupation, however, can be presumed to have as much to do with restoring democracy as the Panama invasion had to do with eliminating the drug trade -- that is to say, practically nothing.

The goal is to protect the Haitian elite and to keep Aristide and his supporters from getting out of hand. The US presence -- including military psychological operations units and the CIA -- will be strong at least through the end of Aristide's term of office. By that time, if all goes well, psy ops will have kept the island's left from getting rambunctious or even well organized and Haiti can be turned over to a pro-US pseudo-democrat.

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The old and new mainstream
Test the waters

Current establishment	New mainstream
Stresses productivity and efficiency of system	Stresses sustainability and stability of communities
Focus is on self, bureaucracies, institutions.	Focus is on community, family and place
Favors two-party rule and laws to support same	Favors third parties or has no party identification. Favors easy access to electoral system
Emphasis on international trade, "global competition," abstract economic indicators	Emphasis on small business, domestic economy. jobs, wages, benefits, quality of life
Favors power centered in Washington and in major corporations	Favors decentralized power
Economic policy favors multinational and Fortune 500 corporations	Favors small business, domestic corporations, and community based economics
Emphasis on national environmental regulation	Emphasis on local environmental control and action
Lawyer dominated political elite, precedence given to lawyerly and regulatory solutions, emphasis on win-lose solutions.	Antipathy to lawyers in power, resistance to lawyerly and regulatory solutions, receptive to solutions negotiated or mediated by communities or individuals involved.
Emphasizes national and international solutions to problems	Emphasizes state and local solutions to problems.
Individual rights subservient to needs of the state	Individual rights dominant.
Individual rights are balanced by responsibilities	Individual rights are inalienable.
People "participate" in politics through surrogate media such as talk shows, polls, and televised "town meetings."	People should participate in politics directly.
Media is vehicle for political leaders and commentators to tell people what to think.	Media should tell politicians and others in power what people are thinking. Should provide needed facts about issues and those in power.
Bill of rights and other constitutional provisions may be reinterpreted in light of changing situations.	Bill of rights and other constitutional provisions more typically seen as permanent standards
Government should be guided by experts, "wise men" and think tanks	Government should be guided by popular will, citizen organizations, referendum, recall and initiatives.
Politics dependent on corporate financing and lobbyist influence is accepted as normal.	Politics dependent on corporate financing and lobbyists is considered wrong.

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Analytical	Intuitive
Consumerism	Simplicity, conservation, recycling
Words are transitory symbols to achieve short-range goals. Reliance on jargon	Words have permanent meaning and value. Reliance on plain language
Ends justify the means	Means are the end
Situational values	Fixed values
Elite leaders tend to apocalyptic visions of major problems.	Grassroots leaders bring can-do attitude to major problems.
Supports giant, intractable bureaucracies	Opposes giant, intractable bureaucracies.
Leader-oriented politics	Issue-oriented politics
Defensive of current paradigm	Searching for new paradigm
Privacy subservient to information needs of state	Individual privacy very important
Success and power	Reputation and integrity
Competition	Cooperation
Corporate rights considered equal to individual rights	Individuals rights superior to corporate rights
Little concern over government waste	Great concern over government waste

This chart attempts to list some of the common differences in values between those who are part of America's ruling establishment and those who are critical of it. The catalog deliberately avoids issues that divide those outside the establishment (such as race, abortion, gun control) and seeks to identify the common ground the establishment would prefer its critics didn't notice.

The thesis is that many decentralist progressives, non-establishment conservatives, greens, libertarians, members of United We Stand, grassroots activists, ethnic groups, unaffiliated independents, non-participating citizens, and politically uninvolved young tend towards the values on the right side of the chart. Active supporters of the two parties, Washington-centered liberals and conservatives, the mainstream media, corporate leaders, establishment academics and social scientists and the foreign policy elite tend towards the values in the left column.

This is a work in progress, so test the waters of the new mainstream yourself. Where do you come out? Post this chart, reprint it, pass it on. Let us hear of improvements, suggestions and reactions.

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PNS quotes writer Allan Nairn, who has covered US operations in Latin America for much of the last decade, as saying, "Every [US] military and intelligence person I've talked to said they won't be able to tolerate mass mobilization by the popular movement and by the pro-Aristide forces." And says Ehrl Lafontant of the Haiti Communications Project, "There is only one year left to Aristide's term. Aristide will only have time to supervise elections in 1996. By then the environment will be made suitable for rightist organization to successfully participate in elections because the democratic grassroots organizations won't have been able to organize or work because of the military repression."

The Haitian embargo caused starvation, malnutrition and death, which helped to cause the exodus of raft people which in turn led to the Clinton administration to feeling it had to take stronger action. Meanwhile, American company exports (helpfully excluded from the embargo) from Haiti shot up 44% during the embargo and Madame Cedras was seen shopping in Miami as recently as last summer.

The hidden factor in the debate over Haiti has been AIDS. It has fueled opposition to Haitian immigration as well as doubts about the wisdom of an invasion. The *Washington Times* reported that the feds set aside $260,000 for condoms for US soldiers in Haiti. By 2010, the death rate in Haiti is expected to double because of AIDS with life expectancy falling from 59 to 44 years.

Land of the free

Russia is now locking up people at a faster rate than the US.

The *Texas Observer* reports that "it would be cheaper to send an inmate the University of Austin year round, pay full tuition, books, provide a dorm room, a full meal plan and $300 a month for pizza, beer and condoms than to keep that inmate locked up." UT Austin would cost about $12,230 a year. A year at Huntsville costs $15,600. But that's only about $43 a day. In New York City it's costing $135 daily to keep people incarcerated.

A suit has been filed against the federal government for allegedly concealing environmental crimes at Groom Lake, an unacknowledged hyper-secret military facility in Nevada. The suits charge that illegal disposal of toxic wastes caused serious injuries to employees at the secret base, and at least one death. The plaintiffs are asking the federal judge to let them use pseudonyms on grounds that "there is a substantial danger here that the plaintiffs will be subject to retaliation by the government or possible physical attack and harassment from third parties in Nevada."

Not only are America's harsh prison justice policies contributing to the spread of AIDS, but they may also be helping spead pneumonia. A study of a deadly outbreak at Harris County Jail in Houston, TX, five years ago found that prisoners had an average living space of 34 square feet. Current engineering standards suggest giving inmates at least 50 square feet. The study found that no prisoners with more than 80 square feet of living space got sick. It also reported that the jail ventilation system provided one-third as much air per person per minute as considered necessary.

Education 1994

A study by the American Legislative Exchange Council has found that school size -- and not classroom size -- is the key to performance among students. The report suggested that children do better in places small enough that the principal knows the name of each student. Rural schools that outpaced national academic averages often did so despite large classes.

The idea mill

Pedal Express is delivering packages in the SF East Bay area, using work bikes made by Human-Powered Machines of Eugene OR. The bikes can carry up to 200 pounds of cargo and have an enclosed container that can hold 18 grocery bags. *Info: 510-486-0773*

Fresh Start Farms -- which employs homeless workers -- has signed up 70 restaurants in San Francisco since last November to buy $250,000 worth of organic food each year.

Foreign affairs

Three good reasons to gut GATT, as outlined by Ralph Nader:

1. Under the proposed World Trade Organization, panels of three unelected trade bureaucrats would hear challenges by other nations to US laws. If a US law was found to violate trade rules, WTO would direct the US to change the law or face automatic economic sanctions. This would make federal, state and local laws subject to the judgment of unelected, unaccountable trade bureaucrats representing multinational corporate interests. In effect, the

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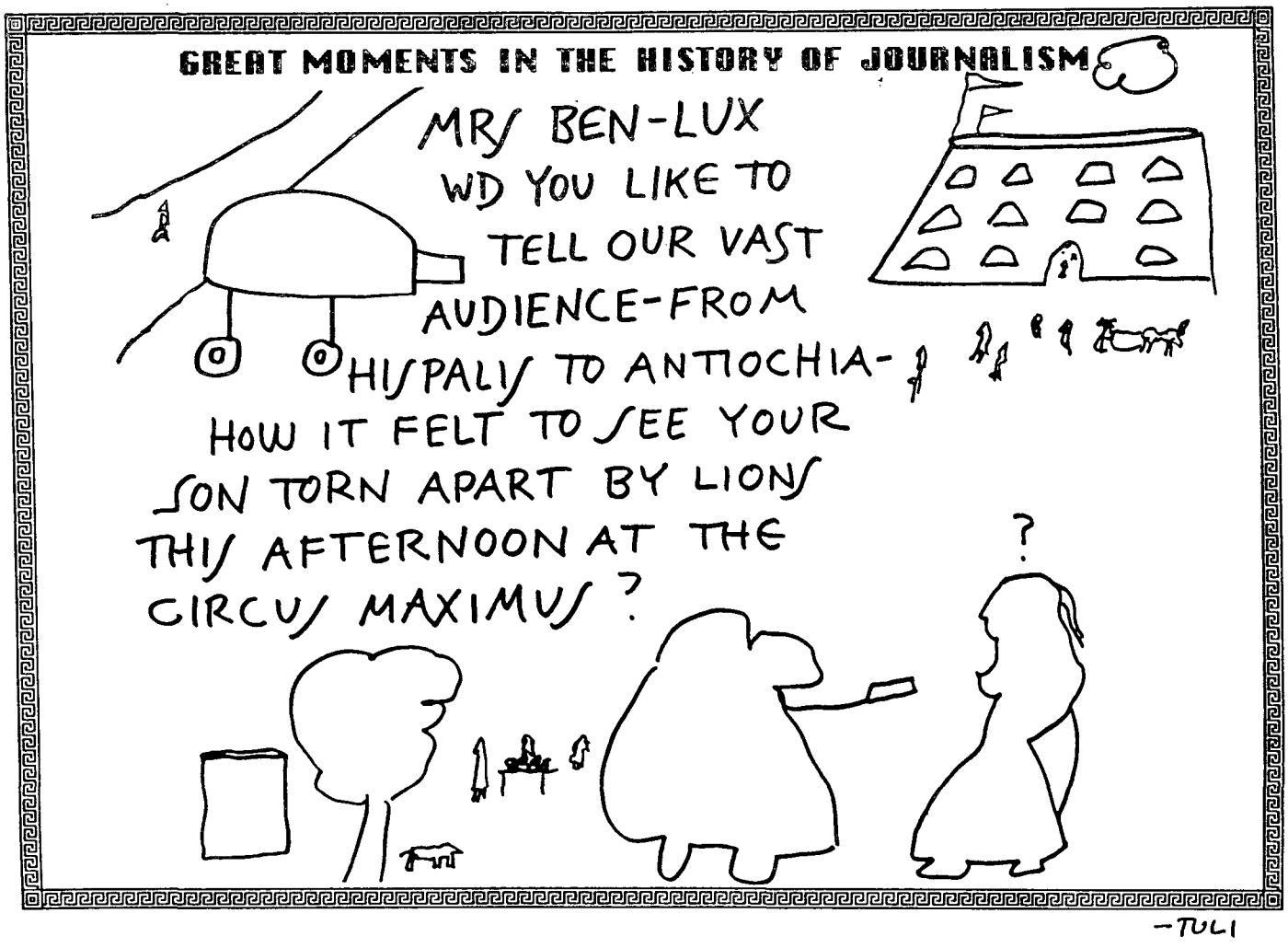
GREAT MOMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF JOURNALISM
MRS BEN-LUX WD YOU LIKE TO TELL OUR VAST AUDIENCE-FROM HISPALIS TO ANTIOCHIA- HOW IT FELT TO SEE YOUR SON TORN APART BY LIONS THIS AFTERNOON AT THE CIRCUS MAXIMUS ?
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-TULI

multinational would be sovereign and the nation-state would be subservient. The process would be secret and would not be subject to the US Freedom of Information Act.

2. The rules of WTO would promote the lowering of US food safety standards since our currently high standards could easily be considered illegal trade barriers. If successfully challenged, the US would have to import contaminated food or pay economic penalties to keep it out. Food safety laws at risk include restrictions on the use of hormones in beef and milk; limits on food additives that cause cancer, strict food inspection standards, bans on dangerous pesticide residues, food labeling laws and food irradiation restrictions.

3. WTO would limit US legislation in other ways. For instance, a gas guzzler tax could be considered a violation of trade rules because it employs an approach that is not "least trade restrictive," even if it's the only politically feasible alternative. Congress would have to change successfully challenged laws or the US would face perpetual trade sanctions. The WTO's effect on US environmental laws would be so devastating that even environmental groups that supported NAFTA are opposed to the GATT proposals,

China is facing a potential grain deficit so large it could overwhelm the ability of the US and other countries to export replacement supplies, reports the Worldwatch Institute. The result could be much higher grain prices.

FEEDBACK

On creating money

Tom Slaughter, Libertarian candidate for the Michigan House of Representatives, didn't like Bob Blain's article on creating money:

It is a nice idea that governments could create money without taxes, without interest, without taking from the people. Santa Claus is also a nice idea. Is the government some sort of God that can create resources out of thin air?

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Or from nothingness? If so, why stop with capital projects? Why not just create money for all government spending and just abolish taxes entirely? Money is a claim on the resources available in the society (in this case, society is used to mean the whole world). When the government creates money, the government is exerting a claim on resources. Raising the reserve rate acts to reduce claims other people have on the resources of society. You are not creating more resources for people to use, you are merely changing who gets to decide how society's resources are being used.

The question is, who gets left out? Who no longer can make the investments or purchase the items they want? The problem is not democratic decision making versus decision making by the rich. The rich may get to make fewer investments, but the people more likely to be hurt are the poor, the marginal, the powerless. Do we really want to hurt them to protect the middle classes from taxes or to provide more services for them? Another problem is the long term effect. In a truly free market, control over resources tends to concentrate in the hands of those most able to increase them. Resources allocated by the government tend to be controlled by those more able to wield power and make alliances, not by those that know how to create value. Hence, over time, the total amount of wealth available to society decreases. Yes, I know that there has never been a truly free market. I also know that there has never been a truly disinterested public servant totally impervious to his/her own interests and only looking to the best interests of "society" -- whatever that mythical beast is.

Other questions are raised about the use of the raised money: do we want government money to be used on churches? Is the sea wall ecologically sound? How do the roads affect the environment? A major problem of having government control resources is that more and more issues become politicized. It no longer becomes a question of getting two people to agree, or a small number to agree: one has to start convincing a majority of the people. Decisions that used to be private move into the public sphere, and what people do in their private lives becomes a concern of the public.

Is that the kind of society we want? I sure don't.

I can agree with Dr. Blain's statement that money is just an accounting device. He says: "Money is . . . a system of notes certifying that the bearer has done a share of the work and deserves a share of the wealth." If that is so, how can government justify creating money? Created money would not represent work done, would not represent resources created, but be just a power grab by the government. How can it be anything else?

Bob Blain responds

Mr. Slaughter grasps the essential idea in my article, that money is a system of certificates. People receive them when they have done an agreed amount of work and they pass them on to receive their pay in goods and services from third parties. The essential next question is where do we want the certificates to originate?

Should certificates originate in the marketplace? Should the local gas station owner certify that his pumps are accurate? Or should government send inspectors out periodically to check gas pumps and certify their accuracy with a sticker affixed to each pump as they do now?

Should customers create their own money certificates in payment for gas? Or should there be government agencies, like banks and government comptrollers of the currency, to ensure that certificates are authentic?

I think you would agree that the market could not function without government agencies to establish and enforce standards of weight and measure. The market could not function if everyone could issue their own money. The market functions best in partnership with government. Each has an essential role. Government sets the general rules and people in the marketplace fill in the details.

The problem is that we are now operating under a bad general rule, namely, that private citizens create 98 percent of the money supply and charge interest on it for as long as the money remains in circulation. The only way the interest can be paid and money remain in circulation is to add the interest to existing debt. Because of this bad rule, debt has grown exponentially. It has exploded to more than $15 trillion, double the total value of the entire country. If debtors could pay off their debts, creditors would own everything in the United States and debtors would still owe them another United States, lock, stock, and barrel.

The general rule needs to be changed so Congress creates a larger portion of money and gets it into circulation interest free. This would save taxpayers billions of dollars that would otherwise go to pay interest. Congress would supply money certificates to school boards, county commissions, and city and state governments to give to the people who build new schools, water treatment plants, roads and bridges, and waste recycling facilities. Recipients would then use the certificates to collect their real pay of goods and services from third parties.

Contrary to what Tom Slaughter says, the created money would represent work done. My school district is about to build a new high school for $32 million. Congress could authorize our school board to write checks against an account established on the books of the U.S. Treasury to pay the suppliers and contractors to build the school. These checks would certify that the bearers had built the school and, therefore, deserved to be paid. Subsequently, taxes would be collected and the loan repaid.

The loan would have served its purpose of certifying that a $32 million dollar new high school had been built, the people who built it would be paid in full, the community that owned it would have paid for it in full, and nothing would have been added to the federal debt.

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Instead, if we do not change our method of finance, our school district will pay $62 million for a $32 million dollar school. We will get nothing for the $30 million in interest and lose everything we might have bought with it. Tom Slaughter, what do you think of that "power grab" for no work and no resources created? Why blame the victims, the federal government and taxpayers, already saddled with a federal debt soon to rocket pass $5 trillion? We need to work together to stop this debt explosion.

Request from India

From the Learning and Educational Research Library in Madras, India:

Respected Sir: Our independent, self-managed, free and non-profit making library was established on August 1980. For us, it was a day filled with joy and happiness. We are anxious to inform this good news.

We are sure that we shall be able to maintain good relations with you on a regular basis to this end, we would be greateful to you if you send us the publications of the Progressive Review.

Anyway we wish that you would be kind enough to remain as a sympathized donor of your publications for our free and non-profit making library. Therefore kindly cause the supply of books connected educational, management studies, journalism, housing, women, youth, visual handicaps, and other research information.

We are happy to inform you, Women and Rural Welfare Centre is voluntary organization dedicated towards the welfare of women and rural community. The centre aims at motivating educating and organizing the women, rural public and the disabled group to enhance their social, economical and cultural status through their involvement.

It would also request you to keep our name in your mailing list for your future monthly magazine, and annual report. Anyway we request for best cause, we are not in a position to secure the same on payment of the price.

Anxiously awaiting for your reply and do stay in touch together with your publications and oblige.

We would be happy to stay in touch and oblige if some reader would like to send the library a $27 gift subscription.

ROADSIGNS

Drugs

Number of Americans currently using marijuana: 9 million

Number who have used it at some point in the their lives: 70 million

New penalty for growing one marijuana plant in Michigan: 4 years in prison

Earth

Increase in worldwide life expectancy, 1950-1993: 19 years (to age 65)

Current population of the world: 5.5 billion

Population the earth's resources can support over the long run: 1.5 to 2 billion

Economics

Change in percent of Americans in poverty 1964-1969: down 36%

Change in percent of Americans in poverty 1969-1994: up 19%

Percent of large corporations that reduced their workforce last year: 47%

Haiti

Number of rulers Haiti has had since the fall of Jean-Claude Duvalier in 1986: 7

Number of coup d'etats during this time: 6

Politics

Number of young people in AmeriCorps: 20,000.

Number of young people who volunteer without the aid of Clinton's national service: 2.9 million.

Percentage increase in money moving into speculative commodities trading since Jan. 1, shortly before news broke that Hillary Clinton had made an easy $100,000 in cattle futures: 40%

Secrecy

Number of pages in the CIA's first-ever annual report on its operations, newly required by Congress: 12

Transportation

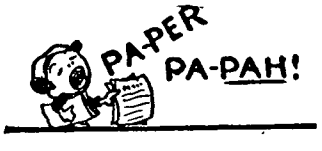
Mass transit subsidies from all levels of government, 1990: $377 million.

Subsidy by all levels of government to autos after deducting taxes, fees and fines: $2.4 billion.

Indirect costs of vehicle use (environmental damage, accidents etc.), above costs paid by car users: $308 billion.

SOURCES

Earth: Worldwatch Institute, Researchers Paul Ehrlich of Stanford and Gretchen Daily of Berkeley in a paper quoted by AP **Economics:** US News & World Report, *Washington Post* **Drugs:** 1993 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, Dept. of Health and Human Services. *NORML* **Haiti:** New Yorker **Politics:** News accounts, *Managed Accounts Report, quoted by Money Magazine* **Secrecy:** Secrecy & Government Bulletin **Transportation:** Komanoff Energy Associations, 270 Lafayette St. NYC, NY 10012, 212-334-9767



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FIELD NOTES

RIP

The Daily Citizen, a short-lived but first rate daily newsletter published by Russell Mokhiber, has suspended publication. Among *DC*'s virtues were some great filler quotes like this one from the *Wall Street Journal* in 1967: "It is the not too distant future, and the biggest financial news item of the day is the merger of General Motors Corp. and American International Consolidated Everything Inc. The GM purchase completes AIC's acquisition program. It has now bought every company in the US. Apparently, there was no competitive overlap involved and the [Justice Department's Anti-Trust] Division gave it a pre-merger clearance."

READING

Run, Run, Run: The Lives of Abbie Hoffman: A biography of Hoffman by his brother Jack Hoffman and Daniel Simon. Tarcher/Putnam. $22.95

New Money for Healthy Communities by Thomas Greco is an important survey of a variety of alternatives to conventional money, from green dollars to transportation script. A history of various efforts at alternative money systems you won't find elsewhere. $18.95 from Thomas H. Greco Jr., POB 42663, Tucson AZ 85733.

Tune in Tomorrow: One of the delights of editing the *Progressive Review* is choosing which one of Tom Tomorrow's strips to run. But since the *Review* comes out monthly and Tomorrow appears weekly, our readers only get to see about a quarter of T²'s genius. For more, pick up a copy of *Tune in Tomorrow*, a collection just published by St Martin's Press.

The Quickening of America by Frances Moore Lape and Paul Martin Du Bois has been described by Ralph Nader as a "cornucopia of success stories" from grassroots America. Organizing ideas and solutions that work. $15 from Center for Living Democracy, RR1, Black Fox Road, Brattleboro VT 05301.

GATHERINGS

A Citizens Conference to Stop Gun Violence: Convened by the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence and the Episcopal Diocese of Washington. Seminars, discussions, and speakers on the subject of gun violence and practical remedies. Early registration: $75. November 11-13, Washington DC. Info: 202-328-2900.

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